

A SHORT
ACCOUNT

OF

John Dillon.



L O N D O N:

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BY Mr. *Johnson's* advice, I will endeavour to leave some little account of myself behind me. But I must be very brief: my weakness being such, that I cannot say much at once.

I was born in the army, and received his Majesty's pay at about fourteen years of age, belonging to General *Montague's* regiment. In the year 1746 I was call'd abroad, and was in the battle of *Dettingen*, in the midst of the *French* Gens d'arms and Gard a corp, which were cutting down our men on every side. Yet not an hair of my head was hurt: but I was nothing affected either by the danger or the deliverance.

At the battle of *Fountenoy*, thousands fell on my right and my left. I was taken prisoner, but had not one wound. This did affect me deeply, and I solemnly resolv'd, to lead a new life. But it was in my own strength, so that after a few weeks I was the same man as before.

Another danger I was in, from which, humanly speaking, it was scarce possible to escape. We were fourteen regiments of *English*, *Hanoverian* and *Dutch*, who were left near *Maestrich*, to cover the retreat of our grand army. The next morning, about nine o'clock, we saw the *French* grand army near us, who advanced in good order. We had thrown up a little breast work in our front the night before. From this we kept a constant fire, with grape-shot from our can-

non, and small shot from our musketry: numbers of them were killed, but they continually supplied their places with fresh men, till coming up to our breast-work, they poured their fire all upon us at once. We were then obliged to make the best of our way, to a plain, where we expected to find our grand army. But they had marched the night before, near twelve miles, and had passed the river *Mayne*. Yet a few of us were enabled to overtake them; though when we came out of the field, the strongest company in our regiment could muster only eleven out of seventy men. Yet I continued in open rebellion against God, till the war broke out again.

It was on March 27, 1744, that I married at *Preston* in *Lancashire*. Some years after General *Montague*, Lieutenant Colonel before, being preferred to a regiment, made me his Drum Major, but told me, unless I left off cards, he would send me about my business. I did leave them off; but in other things was as bad as ever, till we were ordered for *Ireland*, and stationed at *Cork*. But I was not easy. Fearful thoughts followed me. I often wished, that there was no God, or that I had no soul. Yet I went on in sin: although frequently in the midst of my drinking and singing obscene songs, I have been suddenly struck; my countenance changed, and I could not open my mouth. I then made fresh resolutions; but when fresh temptations came they vanished away. So I continued in sin, though as weary of sin as the Israelites of their *Egyptian* bondage. I was in this state, when I had two fits of sickness, in each of which I vehemently promised amendment; but almost as soon as they were over, I returned as a dog to the vomit.

During my recovery from a third fit of sickness, the Holy Spirit began to work powerfully in me, bringing all my sins to my remembrance, which had been from my very childhood. Now the constant cry of my heart was, "What must I do to be saved?" And as soon as I got better, I went to church every day: but whenever the commandments were read in the communion service, I was cut to the heart, and at the end of each, my cry was, "Guilty, O God! I am the man! But
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have mercy upon me, and I will never do so any more."

I continued thus for about eight or ten days : when on Friday, Oct. 11, 1757, in the afternoon the Curate read (the second lesson) the 15th of St. *Luke*. From the beginning of the chapter I found that cloud which was on my soul begin to give way. At the 10th verse my despair almost past away, and the tears began to flow from my eyes. Yet I was not satisfied : I thought something was wanting, but could not tell what it was. I felt a straitness on my heart : but at the beginning of the parable of the prodigal, I was all attention. I do not remember, that one thought wandered from the narrative while it was reading : I found myself the very man. With my whole heart I joined in that, *I will arise and go unto my Father*. My heart now began to soften much more ; and from the 19th to the end of the 23d verse, I found all within me just like wax melting before the fire. And when those words were read, *This my Son was dead, and is alive again ; he was lost and is found*, my soul was fully set at liberty, from all guilt and condemnation for past sins. My heart rejoiced in God my Saviour, and my mouth broke out in holy praise. I came home rejoicing to my wife, and told her, I believed some good thing had happened to me. I could then express myself in no better manner : for I did not understand what justification meant.

I had not continued in this joy many days when Satan came upon me like a flood, charged afresh with all my sins, and told me, there was no possibility of my being saved. This sunk me very low. I went to the Curate and told him of all my trouble. He bid me, "Not to be afraid, for all would be well." I went away pretty well contented. But I had not been long at home before Satan began to tempt me in another way. He suggested, That the Bible was but a cunning devised Fable ; that there was no Christ, yea, no God. The temptation was the heavier, because I had no man to open my mind to. But the Lord was with me in my temptation, and gave me the consolation of his Spirit ;

which though not continuing long at a time, yet greatly refreshed my soul.

After some time, a maid servant of our Colonel, observing a change in my life and conversation, came to my room, and after a little discourse asked me, "If I would go with her and hear the Methodists?" I told her what a blessing I had found at church, and said, I did not care to go any where else. But some days after another woman importuning me much, I promised, I *would* go once. I went with her to hear Mr. Trembath, and was wonderfully pleased, to hear him preach without book. Yet it was some time before I went to hear again. In the mean time I was overcome by one of my besetting sins, anger. For a mere trifle, I spoke hastily to my wife, and continued for some time in a violent passion. My peace was gone: the visitations of the Holy One were withdrawn, and my soul covered with darkness and horror. What to do, I could not tell: I would have done any thing, to regain what I had lost. When I was advised to go and hear the *Methodists* again. I readily went, and hearing the preacher say, *All manner of sins, shall be forgiving unto man*; only let him come to Christ: my hope so sweetly revived, that I had no more occasion to be asked, to hear the *Methodists*. I now longed for every opportunity of hearing. And the people, seeing a stranger attend so close, came to me after preaching, first one, then another, talking of the things of God, encouraging me to go on, and always pointing me to Christ. After a time, I wanted to see the manner of their meeting together in a class. I met in one, and soon after joined the Society.

In a few days the Lord visited my soul and restored the light of his countenance. I walked comfortably again, praising and adoring God. But it was not long, before I was grievously attacked by the enemy, concerning the divinity of Christ; and the more I reasoned with him, the more I was perplexed. At length I saw, it was enough for me, to rest in that general declaration, *There are three that bear record in heaven: and these three are one*. I was then delivered from the force of the temptation, which never after returned with the same violence.

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By the time I had heard the preaching about a year, I was clearly convinced, that although justification was an invaluable blessing, yet without sanctification, without the mind which was in Christ, I was not meet for heaven. Indeed there is not the least doubt, but every child of God, who endures unto the end, shall be put into possession of this; seeing he hath promised who cannot lie. But how long or how short a time before death, this was to be expected, I could not tell. I had heard that many in *London* had obtained this, and many more were expecting it continually. I considered, it was *not of or by works*, but the free gift of God: that the heart is purified *by faith*, and that *all things*, in Christ, *are now ready*. I was convinced, that God may do what he pleases with his own, if he could give it at the article of death, so he might give it 10, 20 or 30 minutes, or as many years before death. I found a strong desire to be a partaker of it, and began to pray for it with my whole heart. But it was suggested, "You have not been justified long enough yet, to expect so great a blessing:" and, "Such an unworthy, unfaithful wretch as you, cannot expect such a favour from God." And hereby I was prevailed upon to give up my earnest pursuit of it. At other times, when I have been just grasping the blessing, I have been turned back by another suggestion, "Not now: You cannot receive it now: You are not earnest enough." But I have always remarked, That when I gave up the earnest expecting it *now*, my soul grew barren and lifeless.

I continued thus for near two years, when Mr. *Wesley* came to *Limerick*, where the regiment I was in then lay, just before the ground for the Preaching-house was taken. Under his first sermon, on, *Now is the day of salvation*, I was stirred up more than ever. I said, if I can only believe, I shall obtain the prize: but found, the utter impossibility of doing this of myself. However the strong desire continued in my heart, with earnest prayer for it. Before Mr. *Wesley* left *Limerick*, he told the Society, if they could procure ground for building, while he was at *Cork* and send him word, he would come back, and spend four days with them.

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They sent him word. When I heard Mr. *Wesley* was come (in June 1762) I went to see him directly. He told me of some in *Cork*, who had lately received the pure love of God. At that very instant, my soul broke out in strong desire and prayer. In coming back to my room along the streets, my soul was in constant prayer. But I found like a large mountain of unbelief standing in my way. As I came over *Thomond bridge*, I gave over praying in words, and began to mourn and sigh, when in an instant, I felt a change through my whole heart and soul, such as my tongue cannot express. My soul was filled with love, my mouth with praise, and as I went along, I could do nothing but look to heaven.

You may ask, what difference is there between this state, and that I experienced before, I will simply declare what I felt. 1. Though I walked comfortably with God for near two years before, yet I often doubted, and was ready to give up all as a delusion. But I have never since had the least shadow of doubt, but can every hour and every moment, behold the light of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ. 2. In my former state my affections were never quite free from one particular idol. It was dear to me as life itself, and I could not give it up. But my heart was now entirely free, nor had it the least part of my affections. 3. Before I found anxious cares and distressing fears. Now they are all vanished away. 4. After the first change, I still felt pride, anger, and self-will, more than I could well bear. Since the second I have not felt the least degree, of any of these evil tempers: although temptations to all have not been wanting; but they passed by as a dart. Not that my natural tempers were destroyed; only they were changed by the mighty power of God, and directed into their right channels, grace flowing through every faculty of my soul, and enabling me to offer up my body, soul, friends, all I am and all I have, as a sacrifice to God, every moment, and that without the least reserve.

I likewise still found myself liable to ten thousand mistakes: which though they had no occurrence of my will, yet were violations of that holy law, which demands

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demands perfect, uninterrupted obedience in every thought, word and action. These therefore would shut us out from the glory of God, were it not for the atoning blood: so that still, although through the power of the eternal Spirit, I am altogether thine, yet

“ Every moment, Lord, I need
The merit of thy death.”

From this time, through the great blessing of God, I enjoyed health of soul and body, till in July 1767, I was appointed for the North of *Ireland*. That into which I went, was a new circuit, in which there were not yet things very convenient for the preachers. The beds were generally damp, the houses wet and cold, not well secured from either rain or wind. And my labour was great. Hearing the people crying out on every side for preaching, I forgot myself and almost continually went beyond my strength. Nevertheless, I held out pretty well till spring: but in April 1768, I was seized with the fever. The house I was in was on the side of a mountain, very bleak and cold. It was about six yards long and four broad. There were four beds in it: in three of which lay the husband, wife, five small children, with a man and maid servant. Here I lay six weeks all but a day. From this time I had not my former strength; although the people were exceeding kind, and let me want nothing that was in their power. When I was a little recovered, my fellow labourers being still sick, I laboured to supply their lack of service, and thereby brought that weakness upon myself, which never was quite removed. But the Lord made my bed in all my sickness. The cabin was a little *Bethel* to me. He kept my soul in perfect peace, and in a full assurance of dwelling in his house for ever.

The August 1768 following I was appointed for *Cork*. Here it pleased God to visit me first with a fever: afterward with an inflammation of the lungs once and again, and then with a fistula. Here I met with good friends, who suffered me to want nothing which could
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be of any use. Mean time my soul was kept exceeding happy. I had no repining thought, nor any choice, but was willing to live or die, as He saw most for his glory. As soon as I was able to take a journey, on Sunday Sept. 3, I set out for *Dublin*, where I was stationed. I came thither, Thursday 7. With much difficulty I continued in my labour, till a little after Christmas: when some mercurial pills, which I was advised to take for the fistula, gave me the finishing stroke. But here I found Christian friends in plenty. Had I been the Lord Lieutenant, there could not have been more care taken of me. May they all hear at last, *In as much as ye have done it unto the least of these, ye have done it unto me.*

As to my own conduct, since I first, through mercy believed, which is about fourteen years, I am ashamed and confounded in the sight of God, at his great love to me a poor sinner: at thy long suffering, O my God and Saviour, bearing so long with me, at thy great love, as it were forcing thyself upon me, and after my constantly-repeated short-comings, still shewing me the precious blood that *cleanseth me from all sin.*

But it may be asked, "Are you not deceived in this?" I answer, God gives his children, not the spirit of the world, but his own Spirit, for this very end, that they may *know the things, which are freely given to them of God.* By this Spirit I am not deceived. As plainly as I can feel the wind blow, I felt a work of grace in my heart, drawing me nearer and nearer to God. I felt a daily dying to this vain world, and a daily overcoming the remains of sin, till God was pleased to remove it all at one stroke. At the same time the Spirit testified, that these things were freely given of God to a poor sinner.

O Lord, keep me from every appearance of boasting! Of thee only will I boast, my Lord, my God and my all: I will speak of thy loving kindness, while I have a voice. Only keep my heart filled with thy love, and open my mouth to shew thy praise. O that the few days I have on this side eternity, may be filled up with holy praise and adoration, telling to all around, how good, how gracious, how kind, how long-suffering, how merciful, how full of compassion thou art; how willing
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to save all that will come to thee, yea, the very chief of sinners : otherwise I must have been lifting up my eyes in hell long ago. O Jesus, thou Saviour and lover of man, hasten to destroy the darkness of unbelief, and spread the light of faith over all the earth, that all may love and adore thee !

It is now near three months, that I have had, with little intermission, grievous pains of body. But my compassionate high priest has hitherto laid his everlasting arms of love underneath me. He has bore me up under all without a murmuring thought, without the least shadow of discontent. I cannot yet believe, I have one pain too much. The Lord give me to think the same to the end !

And now, O Lord God of love, look down in mercy upon me the meanest and weakest of all ; by thy free grace saved thus far, and save me, most holy and gracious God to the end. Forsake me not, O Lord, for a moment ; for without thee I cannot stand ; and whatever sufferings thou givest me, only increase thy love abundantly in my heart, and give me grace and patience

“ To suffer all thy righteous will,
And to the end endure.”

And now into thy hands, O Saviour of sinners, I commit my body, soul and spirit ! Be mercifully pleased to fulfil thy faithful promise to thy servant and handmaid, (who, thou knowest, loveth thee, and has freely given me up to thee) and when thou callest me hence, be an husband to the widow, and a father to our fatherless babe, keep them from the evils of the present world : and of thine infinite mercy, bring us to meet round thy throne, to praise thee world without end !

He grew weaker in February, March and April 1769. May 10, his wife would fain have set up with him ; but he would not suffer it. About seven in the morning, May 11, he changed : but still lay quiet and composed, till about ten he moved his head a little, and without any struggle or groan, fell asleep.

F I N I S.



